

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510  
February 21, 2013

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I respectfully request that you consider awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Dean Smith, former head basketball coach for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In his 36-year career leading the Tar Heels, Coach Smith revolutionized the way the game is played, demanded academic excellence from his players, and fought for equality of justice for all Americans.


Following his service in the United States Air Force and three years as an assistant coach for the Air Force basketball team, Coach Smith joined the bench in Chapel Hill as an assistant before being named head coach in 1961. By the time he retired in 1997, he had won more games – 879 – than any college basketball coach in history, while his players maintained a 96.6 percent graduation rate. In addition to winning NCAA national championships in 1982 and 1993, Coach Smith led Team USA to the gold medal at the 1976 Summer Games.

Coach Smith's impact on the game of basketball is evident in virtually every game today. Coach Smith popularized the "four corners" offense that ushered in the shot clock era. He coached Basketball Naismith Memorial Hall of Fame inductees Billy Cunningham, Larry Brown, Bob McAdoo, James Worthy, and Michael Jordan, and his best-selling book *Basketball: Multiple Offense and Defense* is an essential handbook for aspiring coaches to this day.

Most important, however, were Coach Smith's efforts to reverse racial segregation. As an athlete at Topeka High School, Smith successfully lobbied the school principal to desegregate the varsity basketball team. After becoming head coach at UNC, he brought the first black scholarship athlete to Chapel Hill, future NBA All-Star Charlie Scott. Coach Smith also aided in the desegregation of a local restaurant and helped a black graduate student purchase a home in an all-white neighborhood.

It is for these reasons and so many more that I request you consider awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Coach Dean Smith. North Carolina is a far better place because of Coach Smith, and I believe he is exceedingly qualified for the highest distinction bestowed upon a citizen. I have attached additional biographical information for your review.

Respectfully,

  
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U.S. Senator Kay R. Hagan



## **Dean E. Smith**

### **Background Information**

When ESPN's award-winning SportsCentury program selected the greatest coaches of the 20th Century, it came to no surprise that Carolina basketball coach Dean Smith was among the top seven of all-time. Smith joined other legends Red Auerbach, Bear Bryant, George Halas, Vince Lombardi, John McGraw and John Wooden as the preeminent coaches in sports history.

Smith's tenure as Carolina's basketball coach from 1960-97 is a record of remarkable achievement and consistency. In 36 seasons at UNC, Smith's teams had a record of 879-254. His teams won more games than those of any other Division I men's basketball college coach in history, a record broken in 2007 by Bob Knight and in 2011 by Mike Krzyzewski.

- Smith coached Carolina to the 1982 and 1993 NCAA championships and the 1971 NIT title.
- Under Smith, the Tar Heels won at least 20 games for 27 straight years and 30 of his final 31. No coach in history has ever produced that many consecutive 20-win seasons.
- Carolina was ranked in the final Top 10 of both the Associated Press and coaches' polls each year from 1981-89. That nine-year run is the second-longest streak of Top 10 finishes in history, exceeded only by UCLA's 13-year string from 1967 to 1979.
- The Tar Heels were ranked among the nation's final Top 15 teams in 28 of his last 31 seasons, missing only in 1970, 1990 and 1996, and were among the Top 10 on 23 occasions during that period. Smith's teams finished the season ranked No. 1 in at least one of the two major polls four times (1982, 1984, 1993 and 1994).
- Smith's teams were also the dominant force in the ACC. The Tar Heels under Smith had a record of 364-136 in ACC regular-season play, a winning percentage of .728.
- The Tar Heels finished at least third in the ACC regular-season standings for 33 successive seasons. In that span, Carolina finished first 17 times, second 11 times and third five times.
- Smith's teams finished in the ACC upper division all but one time. That was in 1964, when Carolina was fifth and had its only losing record in ACC regular-season play under Smith at 6-8.
- Smith and Krzyzewski each won 13 ACC Tournament titles.
- His teams played in 11 Final Fours, second in number only to Wooden, who had 12.
- Smith's teams made 23 consecutive appearances in the NCAA Tournament.
- In his last 31 years, Smith led the Tar Heels into the NCAA Tournament 27 times.
- Carolina reached the Sweet 16 of NCAA play each season from 1981-93. That 13-year streak is the second-longest in Tournament history to a 14-year stretch by UCLA from 1967 to 1980.

The awards and accolades continue to be given to Smith, even after he stepped down as Carolina's head coach on October 9, 1997. Smith was named Sportsman of the Year by Sports Illustrated, Honorary Coach of the Year by the United States Olympic Committee, received the Arthur Ashe Award for Courage at the annual ESPY Awards, and was honored with special awards for contributions to basketball by the Atlanta Tipoff Club and New York Athletic Club. He was inducted into the FIBA Hall of Fame in 2007.

In 2006, he was named to the inaugural class of the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame (along with James Naismith, John Wooden, Oscar Robertson and Bill Russell).

Smith also became the first recipient of the Mentor Award for Lifetime Achievement, given by the University of North Carolina Committee on Teaching Awards for "a broader range of teaching beyond the classroom."



He's recognized throughout the sports world for his character, his innovations to the game and his ability to have established Carolina's program as one of the greatest in college basketball. Smith's players consistently produce on the floor, in the classroom and in life.

When Smith broke Rupp's record in 1997, his coaching peers had this to say.

John Wooden: "What's more impressive to me about Dean than the record is how good he is as a teacher of basketball. I've always said he's a better teacher of basketball than anyone else. I couldn't begin to teach players the things Dean has taught them. I've admired him because there's more to him than just wins."

Bob Knight: "Let me say some things that he won't say. He's going to say an awful lot about teams and that's the way it should be. But let me put it in perspective. His being able to do that and do it at a single institution, do it through all the years without ever having a problem with any kind of recruiting violation or probation, is a very singular accomplishment in college basketball. I think it's a great achievement, indicative of a guy who really knows how to coach and has decided from day one that things are going to be done the absolute right way. He's not going to tell you, but just take my word for it. That's a great, great accomplishment for a coach."

Mike Krzyzewski: "It's singularly such a tremendous accomplishment. Whatever is written about him in a positive sense he justly deserves. I know he'll give credit, as we all would, to the players who have played for us, but in this situation the praise for him should rise well above that for the players who played for him."

Roy Williams: "He has a basketball program, he doesn't have a team. And when you have a program, you're concerned about the kids' entire lives, their entire existence ... and what they're going to do after they leave you and what kind of effect you can have on them as they mature."

Dave Odom: "What boggles the mind about him, at least to me, are the numbers of nights he's gone into the arena and been ready to compete on every single possession. I've not done it anywhere close to half as often and there are nights when it seems the season will never end. And yet, he's there, ready to go, always figuring out a way to beat you. Whenever I think about it, I shake my head in wonder."

Terry Holland: "He has been a target for all of us who coached in the ACC to shoot for. It is not always the most pleasant position to be in. The Carolina program was the measuring stick to everybody who came into the league. He has been willing to be the measuring stick. He helped create national exposure not only for North Carolina, but also for the other ACC teams as well and made us all improve our programs."

Perhaps his greatest form of praise on a worldwide level came when a group of his peers, including Hall of Fame coaches Henry Iba, Pete Newell and Auerbach, chose Smith to coach the U.S. Olympic basketball team in the 1976 Montreal Games. The Americans finished a controversial second to the Soviet Union at Munich in 1972. Smith was given the challenge of trying to develop a team to regain the Gold Medal against a group of improving international teams.

He named his long-time assistant, Bill Guthridge, and Georgetown's John Thompson, to be his assistants on the Olympic Team staff. Smith's teaching skills were put to one of their toughest tests.

Smith molded a group of college all-stars into a cohesive unit during a few short weeks in that summer of 1976 and led them to the gold medal, sweeping through the Games undefeated and beating Yugoslavia in the championship game. Emphasizing a tough pressure defense and a fast-breaking, attacking style on offense, the Americans returned to the top of the international game.

Just as Smith used his talents to develop that 1976 all-star team into an Olympic champion, he has prepared a host of players for successful careers in the NBA.



"UNC is a plus-four school," Orlando Magic Vice President of Basketball Operations-Player Personnel John Gabriel said about Smith's teams, "meaning that if I rate a player as the 10th-best player in the NBA Draft, being a Tar Heel automatically jumps him to number six. The plus-four rating is based upon the success of former Tar Heels in the NBA."

The Miami Heat's Pat Riley, who coached former Tar Heel standout James Worthy to three world titles with the Los Angeles Lakers, is another believer in Smith's program.

"We always look for players from North Carolina," said Riley. "If we could draft players every year from North Carolina, we'd do it. You know they know how to play. The players are so full of character like James and Michael Jordan. I have a lot of respect for Coach Smith. I'm the beneficiary of a man who has taught all these guys how to play the game. When they come to the pros, they're refined. They're ready to step right in."

During his last 31 seasons, since Smith's Tar Heels won their first ACC title in 1967, the Tar Heels had a record of 813-207, winning 79.7 percent of their games.

In 23 of those 31 seasons, Carolina won either the ACC regular-season, tournament or both. Most schools are happy just to win 20 games in a season. At Carolina, it became a habit. No school in the country won more total games in that 31-year period than Carolina. UCLA was second with 751. The Tar Heels also had the most wins over his last 20 seasons with 539, and over his last 10 years with 268.

For Smith and his players, the word "class" applied to the team's exemplary sportsmanship on the court, to its excellent academic performance and to Smith's belief that basketball involves many complexities that must be learned over the course of time — that coaching and playing the game is a classroom situation in its own right.

Smith's teams have won championships at every level. There were NCAA titles in 1982 and 1993 and the NIT in 1971. His gold medal-winning team at the 1976 Summer Olympic Games makes Smith one of only three men in history to coach teams to that troika of an NCAA title, NIT championship and Olympic victory. The others are Pete Newell and Knight.

Smith's coaching skills and dedication to playing with class are the reasons he was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass., in 1983. He was also inducted into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame in 1981.

A key to Smith's success was his ability to change Carolina's style to fit his personnel. He favored an offense which used the fast break whenever possible and featured a quick passing attack. But, he was also comfortable in a more disciplined style of play. He liked to play multiple defenses to confuse opponents. However, his preference was a pressure, man-to-man to speed up the action.

The fast-breaking attack, great teamwork in a set offense and steals produced by the defense resulted in a number of easy baskets. Along with good shot selection, those things have helped Carolina annually rank among the best shooting teams in the nation. Carolina failed to hit at least 50 percent from the field just four times in his last 27 years. Even in those four seasons, Carolina topped the ACC in field goal shooting each year.

Among Smith's many innovations were the run-and-jump defense, the scramble defense out of man-to-man pressure defense, the point zone, team huddles at the foul line, double-teaming the screen-and-roll, the free-lance passing game and multiple screens against zone defenses.

Born February 28, 1931, in Emporia, Kan., Dean Edwards Smith grew up as the son of public school teachers. He graduated from Topeka High School in 1949 and went to the University of Kansas on an academic scholarship. He played varsity basketball and baseball and freshman football for the Jayhawks. He was a member of Jayhawk basketball teams that won the NCAA title in 1952 and finished second in 1953.

Smith was an assistant coach at Kansas to Phog Allen and Dick Harp, then served in the U.S. Air Force as a lieutenant. While in the service, he played and coached basketball in Germany. Smith served for three years as an assistant basketball coach under Bob Spear,



recognized by his peers as one of the outstanding coaches in the history of the game, and one year each as head baseball and head golf coach at the United States Air Force Academy. In 1958, the late Frank McGuire asked him to join his staff at Carolina as an assistant coach. Smith served as an assistant under McGuire for three years before McGuire resigned to become head coach of the NBA's Philadelphia Warriors in the summer of 1961. At that time, Carolina Chancellor William Aycock tapped the 30-year-old Smith to become UNC's head coach.

Smith shared his knowledge of the game with a talented group of assistants. Many of his assistants went on to head coaching jobs, including Larry Brown, Roy Williams, John Lotz, Kenny Rosemond, Eddie Fogler, Randy Wiel and Bill Guthridge.

Smith's talents do not lie solely in tutoring quality college coaches as is evidenced by the number of outstanding players who have gone on to professional careers after their days in Chapel Hill. In Smith's 36-year tenure, more than 50 of his players went on to play pro basketball in the NBA or ABA and more played in other professional leagues both in the United States and overseas.

Six of Smith's players won rookie of the year awards in either the NBA or ABA, including Charlie Scott, Robert McAdoo, Walter Davis, Phil Ford, Michael Jordan and Vince Carter.

"Coach taught me the game, when to apply speed, how to use your quickness, when to use that first step, or how to apply certain skills in certain situations," says Jordan. "Dean Smith gave me the knowledge to score 37 points a game and that's something people don't understand."

Smith coached players who went on to become doctors, lawyers and businessmen. Better than 95 percent of his lettermen earned their degrees.

NBA head coach George Karl: "I don't think any of the lettermen can really express the family atmosphere that he's built, the tradition that he's built of loyalty and camaraderie. It's a fraternity that's very much admired by basketball people in the world."

Michael Jordan: "The camaraderie that he has with his players goes a long way. He's taught a lot of us similar traits and we've accepted that and we've moved on as players and people. That's something we treasure more so than maybe our basketball experience — the things that we learned away from the game.

"He's like a second father to me. When I first left school I was unsure, nervous, scared, going into a situation I wasn't really comfortable with and I didn't know if I was ready for it. He calmed me down with a fatherly attitude, taking me under his wing and teaching me a lot of things about being an adult."

Phil Ford: "My first impression of Coach Smith was honesty. He didn't promise me playing time. In fact, he told me I might have to play on the junior varsity my first year. That kind of set me back. But my mom really liked that because she said, 'Phil, if he's not out here promising you that you will start, that means you go there and work hard and do the best that you can do, then he won't be out promising your job to another high school player.' And if you think about it, that made a lot of sense."

Larry Brown: "Nobody's done it better over a longer period of time than he has. He won in the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s and if you look at his teams, they've always been innovative, he hasn't been lost or left behind. He's always stayed ahead. He's kept young. He's learned to deal with all kinds of athletes and the changes we've all faced."

Smith was the winningest coach in the history of the NCAA Tournament with 65 victories (currently second). In 36 ACC Tournaments, he had a coaching record of 58-23, a winning percentage of .716.

Smith, who played for the legendary Phog Allen at Kansas in the early 1950s, is one of only two men to both play on and coach an NCAA championship team. Smith was a member of the Jayhawk squad that won college basketball's top prize in 1952. He then coached the Tar Heels to national titles in 1982 and 1993. Knight is the other person to accomplish the feat. Bob

Knight played on Ohio State's 1960 championship team and then coached Indiana to three titles.

After taking Carolina to the NCAA championship game in 1977, Smith was named National Coach of the Year by the NABC. He received similar honors from the U.S. Basketball Writers Association and Basketball Weekly in 1979 and from Medalist in 1982. He was named the Naismith National Coach of the Year in 1993 after leading the Tar Heels to the national crown.

In 1993, the Atlantic Coast Sportswriters Association named Smith the ACC Coach of the Year, an honor he received on seven other occasions as well—1967, 1968, 1971, 1976, 1977, 1979 and 1988.